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AN APPRECIATION OF ALBERT L. GROLL— LANDSCAPE-PAINTER

In these days of careless classification and hasty generalization, it is a distinct relief to mind and spirit to meet with work which defies the usual prompt summing up of the art reporter with ready-made expressions, as "realistic," "naturalistic," "impressionistic," etc. The work of Albert L. Groll belongs to this category. It would indeed prove an extremely difficult task to classify his landscapes in

such a simple manner. Neither his wide range of subjects nor his various ways of treatment would permit it.

A visit to Mr. Groll's studio will convince one that he has no theories in art. There are pictures that remind one strongly of the *paysage intime*, so successfully cultivated by Daubigny and Cazin; others that show the influence of the poetic suggestiveness and the broad but faithful reproduction of the German landscapist Schlessch and his followers; and a few have the virile coloring of the impressionists and the decorative schemes of the secessionists as leading characteristics. Others, again, simple and rugged



ALBERT L. GROLL
From a Photograph

aspects of nature, vigorously rendered, show that Groll has also learned a good deal of Homer Martin, whom he considers the foremost of American landscape-painters; while his latest efforts, entitled "Symphony in Yellow" and "Symphony in Green and Silver," are conceived in the spirit of decorative realism, as it is felt by the realist of to-day.

Groll is well informed of contemporary art movements; he is mentally, if not technically, at home in all, and without falling into imitation, can vary his performance to suit each phase. He simply

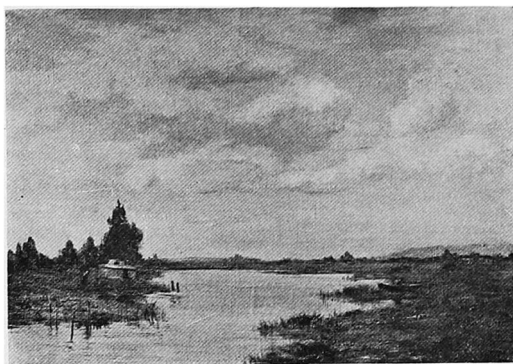
obeys the æsthetic instincts which control him at the time. He paints first, and evolves theories afterwards, which is, taking all things into consideration, a delightful method, as it permits his brushes free play, undisturbed by these endless discussions which, although amusing, are nearly always absolutely futile.



A PENNSYLVANIA VILLAGE
By Albert L. Groll

In visiting a studio one expects to find a considerable amount of work turned out in ordinary routine, sound in workmanship, but in no other sense remarkable. In Groll's studio there is a certain percentage belonging to this order; but there are other canvases showing a higher claim to recognition, which evince a deliberate purpose, and involve a seriousness which establishes in one a corresponding feeling of respectful interest. Pictures like his "Pennsylvania Village" and "Starlight on the Bay" were painted in response to a genuine impulse, which the artist himself, perhaps, could not analyze. He felt the need to do, and simply did it. It is these that set the stamp on an artist's work, and lead one to regard it as, on the whole, of

high or moderate interest and worth.



A BIT OF SANDY HOOK
By Albert L. Groll

Groll's characteristics are brilliant versatility, dexterity with the brush, and spontaneousness of effect, all regulated by innate good taste, for he has little or no reserve power. Hence his pictures attract immediately, and have a faculty of retaining a fair degree of interest, due to their gracious

feeling; in fact, to the good taste, always present—as, for example, his “Evening Hours.” The tranquillity of this canvas’s concentrated force is admirably poetical and impressive. One would be pleased to live with the picture. The drawing, the pleasant color scheme, and feeling of refinement are excellent, though we could find fault with the composition. The background does not hang well together with the foreground, and this seems thrust on one’s attention.

“The Coming Storm,” on the other hand, gives scope for the



STARLIGHT ON THE BAY

By Albert L. Groll

painter’s largeness of feeling. There we see a vast expanse of sandy shore, with a storming sky full of force and luminous color, a strong and truthful picture, in which the moisture in the sand and the movement of the clouds are particularly well rendered. The whole is suggestive of light and air (this picture lost considerably in the reproduction), and is clever to the last degree. It is a canvas of remarkable force, its concentrated intensity giving it a distinction that would make it a strong work in any collection of pictures.

Quite a contrast, in its quiet, rich tones and its regard for solid effects, is his “Bit of Sandy Hook” (the artist’s favorite sketching-ground). The impression of space as well as of masses is suggested in a masterly way, and the values are very skillfully differentiated. His

"Starlight on the Bay" displays a more subtle observation and poetical charm than the others, it impresses one more favorably each time it is seen; while his "Glimpse of a Village," notwithstanding a lack of clearness in the atmosphere, and a certain dullness of tone, is a picture that appeals strongly to the layman.

Groll, born in New York in 1867, is largely a self-taught artist. Apart from desultory attendance when quite a youth at a drawing-school in Darmstadt, Germany, where his uncle, Frederick Gross, was



THE EVENING HOUR
By Albert L. Groll

lithographer to the Duke of Hessen-Darmstadt, and the usual four years' course at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied from cast and life under the guidance of Professors Gysis and Loefftz, he learned all he knows from making out-of-doors studies from nature. From the very beginning he found this sort of training much more inspiring than being shut up within four walls day after day, engaged in the hopeless task of trying to learn what can never be taught. His attempt at studio work did not meet with much encouragement. The professors looked with amused interest upon the efforts of the American who could only "feel landscapes"; and as it was out of the question to make a landscape of the human form, his attendance at the studio was quite unnecessary. Thus thrown on his resources,



THE COMING STORM

By Albert L. Groll

he devoted himself with singular intensity of purpose to the study of nature in its ever-changing moods. His present work is the result.

The result of this constant and careful observation, combined with a memory of line and color, shows itself in the selection of his motives. Every good landscapist must possess this faculty of *selection*, the absence of which would convert the landscapes into mere slices of the earth's surface, to use an expression of William Morris.

Groll is very happy in the choice of his subjects. They show, almost without exception, high pictorial merits, and yet are in no way commonplace. With curious obstinacy he has selected a great many motives which the layman never notices, and left out many that would excite the widest popular interest. His pictures, over many of which hangs a deep poetic charm, fill the mind with a true appreciation of nature. He is still deficient in composition, his lines lack distinction, and his handling of masses is at times uncertain; also his treatment of details, particularly in the backgrounds, is rather superficial. But it is impossible to ignore his virility of conception, his fine sense for color, his determination to discard the obvious in favor of subtlety of feeling and expression, and as he is still one of our young men—artists seldom "arrive," as the French call it, before they are forty—there is every possibility that in time he will master all the intricacies of his art.

He is a hard worker, and has enough of the true artist in him to

have always the desire to do justice to himself; and in passing from one stage to another, he may be trusted to waste nothing of his energies, and to make no mistakes that are serious.

All through his career the question of the way in which color could be used has interested him the most. By instinct he is a colorist of distinctly individual tastes and preferences, and by education and experience he is a colorist of considerable judgment as well. Therefore he always has been at some pains to work out for himself an original method, by which he might arrive at the best results within his reach. As his desire of late has been in the direction of individualizing nature to certain color schemes, and to create landscapes which combine faithful reproduction of nature with color harmonies, entirely dependent on the artist's momentary mood, let us hope that he will gain for himself a place which he will share with no one else.

Perchance nature will gladly reveal some of the secrets she so jealously guards to one who loves her so well as this artist, and that art appreciators may thereby be the gainers. SIDNEY ALLEN.



GLIMPSE OF THE VILLAGE
By Albert L. Groll